



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2007

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
Daryl Fields, Public Affairs Officer
610 N.W. Loop 410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
(210) 384-7452

MIDLAND SECRETARY PLEADS GUILTY TO MAIL FRAUD CHARGE

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that 47 year old Martha Jan Russell, of Midland, Texas, pled guilty to a single count of mail fraud. She entered her plea this afternoon before Magistrate Judge L. Stuart Platt.

Had this matter gone to trial, the government was prepared to prove that beginning in March 2002, and continuing until approximately July 2006, Ms. Russell devised and carried out a scheme to defraud her employer, Clayton Williams Energy (CWI), by causing company checks, without authorization, to be issued to pay personal and family expenses. As part of the scheme, Ms. Russell would periodically submit "donation requests" to superiors at CWI which bore the forged initials of the CWI Chief Executive Officer, indicating, falsely and materially, that Latham had authorized CWI to make the donations.

These donations in some circumstances went to entities, such as Midland Rocket Fastpitch, Midland High School Baseball, and Midland High School Softball, in which Ms. Russell and/or a member of her immediate family had a personal interest. In other cases, the "donations" were in reality used to pay incurred tuition and other expenses for a family member at Angelo State University. Still other times, the check was issued to an entity such as Midland Rocket Fastpitch, but Ms. Russell would forge an endorsement of a representative of the payee entity and use the proceeds of the check to pay personal expenses. During the time period of the scheme, Ms. Russell embezzled approximately \$57,000 from CWI in this manner.

The defendant also would submit invoices that would cause CWI to reimburse her for travel expenses that she never incurred for the company, and in doing so she would falsely represent that she had in fact traveled to various places on CWI business. During the time period of the scheme she embezzled approximately \$87,000 from CWI in this manner.

This case was investigated by the Texas Rangers and is being prosecuted for the government by Assistant United States Attorney John Klassen.

#####